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CHARLES MEDD

CONGRESS AND THE CHANGING OF THE GUARD

ANNCR:

SEVERAL KEY MEMBERS OF THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS ARE LEAVING OFFICE AT THE END OF THE CURRENT SESSION, AMONG THEM SENATE MAJORITY LEADER MIKE MANSFIELD, PRAISED BY HIS COLLEAGUES AND THE PRESS FOR HIS LONG YEARS OF PUBLIC SERVICE. NOT ALL THE DEPARTING MEMBERS WILL BE MISSED AS MUCH AS THE RESPECTED SENATOR MANSFIELD, BUT, AS CHARLES MEDD POINTS OUT, THE NEXT CONGRESS WILL HAVE A DECIDEDLY NEW LOOK.

VOICE:

GENUINE PRAISE FOR AMERICAN POLITICIANS HAS BECOME SUCH A RARE COMMODITY THAT WHEN IT FLOWS FROM SO MANY QUARTERS, AS IT HAS THE PAST FEW DAYS FOR OUTGOING SENATOR MANSFIELD, IT'S AND EVENT WORTH NOTING. BUT MANSFIELD HIMSELF IS A RARE COMMODITY -- A POLITICIAN WHO FOR THIRTY-FOUR YEARS OF PUBLIC SERVICE NEVER RAISED HIS VOICE, SELDOM USED TWO WORDS WHEN ONE WOULD SUFFICE AND WHO SEEMED CLEARLY EMBARRASSED BY THE RECENT TRIBUTES OF HIS COLLEAGUES. ABOUT THE ONLY CRITICISM ONE CAN REMEMBER ABOUT THE MAN WHO SERVED AS MAJORITY LEADER LONGER THAN ANY SENATOR IN HISTORY IS THAT HE WAS NOT PARTISAN ENOUGH, AND WAS THUS MISCAST AS A PARTY LEADER.

IN HIS FINAL SENATORIAL TASK, DEMOCRAT MANSFIELD IS OFF TO CHINA AT THE SPECIAL REQUEST OF REPUBLICAN PRESIDENT FORD. THE ONE-TIME PROFESSOR OF FAR EASTERN HISTORY HAS LONG BEEN INTERESTED IN INTERNATIONAL MATTERS, AND HIS COUNSEL ON

THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE WILL BE MISSED -- EVEN IF NOT ALL THE MANSFIELD COUNSEL WAS FOLLOWED, INCLUDING HIS EARLY WARNINGS AGAINST AMERICAN MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN VIETNAM.

NOR IS MANSFIELD'S SEAT THE ONLY ONE TO BE VACATED ON THE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE. ALSO STEPPING DOWN IS REPUBLICAN HUGH SCOTT, THE SENATE MINORITY LEADER, WHO FOR THE PAST EIGHTEEN YEARS DEVELOPED A REPUTATION AS A POLITICAL MODERATE, AND WHO, LIKE MANSFIELD, WAS NOT RELUCTANT TO BREAK WITH HIS PARTY ON MATTERS OF PRINCIPLE.

AMONG THOSE LEAVING THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ARE TWO MEMBERS WHO HAVE EXERCISED, THROUGH SPECIALIZED COMMITTEES, STRONG INFLUENCE ON AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY. NO MAN IN CONGRESS HAS HAD MORE CONTROL OVER FOREIGN AID PROGRAMS THAN REPRESENTATIVE OTTO PASSMAN, WHO WAS DEFEATED IN A PARTY PRIMARY ELECTION EARLIER THIS YEAR. AND NO CONGRESSMAN HAS HAD MORE AUTHORITY OVER HOW AND WHERE THE STATE DEPARTMENT SPENT ITS MONEY THAN WAYNE HAYS, WHO IS RETIRING FOLLOWING AN EMBARRASSING PERSONAL SCANDAL.

THE PASSING OF MEN LIKE MANSFIELD, SCOTT, PASSMAN, HAYS AND OTHERS OF ADVANCING YEARS WILL MEAN DIFFERENT THINGS TO DIFFERENT PEOPLE. BUT PERHAPS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE CHANGES IN WHAT MIGHT BE CALLED THE OLD GUARD ARE CHANGES IN CONGRESSIONAL PROCEDURES. EXCESSES OF THE SENIORITY SYSTEM -- UNDER WHICH REPRESENTATIVES PASSMAN AND HAYS AND OTHERS GAINED SUCH POWER -- ARE FINALLY BEING CORRECTED, AND COMMITTEE HEARINGS ARE NOW OPEN TO THE PUBLIC. NO MAN CONTRIBUTED TO THESE REFORMS MORE THAN SENATOR MANSFIELD, AND IT'S THIS LEGACY HIS COLLEAGUES PRAISED LAST WEEK AS THIS GOOD AND ABLE MAN LEFT FOR CHINA IN WHAT MAY BE HIS FINAL ACT OF PUBLIC SERVICE.

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